

March 18, 2009



Dear Friend,

Last week, the Second District suffered a terrible tragedy when a lone gunman killed ten people in Geneva and Coffee Counties and then turned the gun on himself. It was one of the most horrific events our state has seen in quite some time. Even though a week has passed since the shootings occurred, we are still asking ourselves what could make someone do this to his family and neighbors.

When I first arrived in Geneva County on Wednesday, I saw a community still in shock. There is no way to fully prepare for something such as this, but the response by law enforcement, local officials, and regular citizens was incredible. I was humbled by the resiliency of the people and the ability for everyone to come together and get through this crisis. I truly believe people around the country will remember the Wiregrass as a place that will do whatever it takes to help its fellow citizens.

Much has been said about the actions of law enforcement during and after the shootings, and indeed we cannot thank them enough. Without their brave and heroic actions, the number of casualties could have been much worse. In times like these, we are reminded of how much we appreciate those who are on the front lines protecting and defending us every day. Everyone in Southeast Alabama owes a debt of gratitude to our law enforcement.

Oftentimes, there is a quick call for new restrictions on gun ownership after events such as the one last week. Indeed, many pro-gun control groups have already called for tighter gun restrictions in light of recent events. In fact even before the shootings occurred, Attorney General Eric Holder said that there should be a reinstatement of the assault weapons ban that was in place for 10 years from 1994 to 2004. I have previously noted that I have concerns with his comments.

While there is certainly a time and place for a stringent debate on gun policy, we need to be thoughtful in our deliberation and respectful of the families who mourn the loss of their loved ones before we begin a rush to judgment on a major policy change. Following the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, Congress debated and thoughtfully passed legislation that better funds the National Instant Criminal Background Check in order to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. Once we diagnose and fully understand how this happened, we can determine the best ways to prevent these violent acts from occurring in the future.

For now, however, it is time to mourn and remember those that we have lost in the Second District and continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers. I believe the memories of departed loved ones will never be forgotten because the foundation of our communities is so strong.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our offices in Montgomery at (334) 277-9113 or Dothan at (334) 794-9680. I am also online at www.bright.house.gov to assist you in any way we can. It is my great pleasure to serve you and the entire Second District of Alabama.

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Congressman Bobby Bright

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